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LUTHER QUINCENTENARY

Modern Roman Catholic Reaction to Luther

R.F.G.Holmes

Luther is a child of the devil, possessed by the devil, full of falsehood and vainglory ... he lusts after wine and women, is without conscience, and approves any means to gain his end ... He is a liar and a hypocrite, cowardly and quarrelsome. /1

Thus wrote Johannes Cochlaeus, contemporary and one-time friend of Martin Luther, a Catholic reformer who had become disillusioned with Luther's reform movement and what he considered to be the contradictions and absurdities in Luther's position, though, as a modern Catholic scholar has shown, Cochlaeus gave no evidence of having read more than the prefaces and epilogues of Luther's books. /2

His Septiceps Lutherus or Seven-headed Luther, published in 1529, has been described as 'a masterpiece of distortion, misrepresentation and also stupidity' /3, but his even more strident Commentaria de actibus et scriptis Martinus Lutheri, published in 1549, set the tone for much subsequent Roman Catholic writing about Luther, as the Catholic scholar Adolf Herte demonstrated.

If Protestants have seen and have presented Luther as a special servant of God, providentially raised up to lead Christ's church back to the truths of the Gospel, Roman Catholics have seen and presented him as a child of the devil - indeed Cochlaeus solemnly reported the fable that Luther was the result of his mother's intercourse with Satan.

It must be conceded, of course, that, in the words of one of our most distinguished contemporary Luther scholars, Gordon Rupp, Luther presented special problems for Roman Catholics:

Luther was a religious who apostasized, renouncing the most sacred vows, and he married a runaway nun. He initiated the most disastrous series of events in the history of the Western Church, he attacked the most revered authorities, the most hallowed rites with outrageous and insulting vehemence. His teachings have been repeatedly and authoritatively condemned. /

It was therefore exceedingly difficult for Catholic scholars to consider Luther objectively and, in spite of the enormous contribution to the development of modern historical scholarship made by men like Mühlher, Dollinger, Lord Acton and Johannes Janssen in the nineteenth century the Cochlaeus tradition of condemnation and character assassination continued dominant in Roman Catholic Reformation historiography until after the First World War. Indeed it was documented and buttressed by the massive publications of two Austrian scholars, Heinrich Denifle, a Tyrolean Dominican and archivist in the Vatican Library and Hartmann Grisar, a Jesuit and professor in the University of Innsbruck.

Denifle was a distinguished mediaevalist and his Luther and Lutheranism, a series of studies rather than a history, made use of unpublished material and he claimed: 'My sole source for the study of Luther was Luther'.

Denifle acknowledged that the sixteenth century Church needed reform and that Luther began as a reformer but was ill-equipped for the task and soon lost his way. He was a reprobate who devised theological excuses to justify his personal self-indulgence, a charlatan who neither discovered nor re-discovered any Christian truth. Denifle presented the results of his examination of sixty-six commentaries on Paul's letter to the Romans, from the fourth to the sixteenth century, to demonstrate that no commentator took the view of the righteousness of God as the punitive justice of God which Luther claimed to be the way he understood it before his Reformation break-through. /6

Denifle's studies appeared between 1904 and 1909 and shortly afterwards, in 1911 and 1912, Grisar's three volume Luther, another collection of essays, was published. Though less violent than Denifle in his denunciations of Luther he still presented him as a man ruined by pride and sensuality, a neurasthenic and psychopath. /7 Neither Denifle nor Grisar considered that Luther had anything of value to say to the Catholic Church, the Lutheran movement was an aberration and Lutherans should return to the Catholic Church without delay.

The perspectives of historians like Denifle and Grisar were reflected in an encyclical of Pius X in May 1910 Editae saepe, Editae saepe which described the Reformers in unflattering terms:

proud and arrogant men, enemies of the Cross of Christ ... earthly minded men whose God is their belly... they spurned the authorised guidance of the Church to follow the most corrupt passions, principles and persons. /8

When papal encyclicals and the publications of scholars set an example in character assassination it is scarcely surprising that popular Catholicism followed their lead in producing caricatures of Luther. P. F. O'Hare in The Facts about Martin Luther, published in America, presented him as 'a blasphemer, a libertine, a revolutionary, a propagator of immorality and open licentiousness' and the Reformation as a 'deformation' which inevitably brought terrible corruptions in its train. /9

In Britain many Roman Catholics probably got their picture of Luther from Hilaire Belloc, a writer who could be brilliant and amusing but whose treatment of the Reformer in his Europe and the Faith, published in 1912, was superficial and prejudiced. Even such a fine scholar as the late H.O.Evennett, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, at whose feet I myself sat with great profit thirty years ago, though he was incapable of substituting personal abuse for reasoned criticism, contributed to Roman Catholic lack of understanding of Luther by presenting him as a morbidly introspective German who personified Teutonic wrongheadedness, and whose doctrine of justification by faith was essentially antinomian. /10 A recent Roman Catholic writer has observed: 'Generations of priests and nuns, educated on these authorities could hardly be faulted for taking a low view of Protestants and Protestantism.' /11

Changes were taking place, however, particularly in Germany, under the impact of advancing historical scholarship and the accelerating ecumenical movement and Roman Catholic scholars who questioned the authenticity of the portraits of Denifle and Grisar and the classical caricature of Cochlaeus began to emerge. At the University of Wurzburg F.X.Kiefl and Sebastian Merkle and in Cologne Anton Fischer began to suggest that there might have been genuinely Christian elements in Luther's protest. /12 Hubert Jedin, who later became famous as the historian of the Council of Trent was warning Catholic historians who wanted to understand Luther in the 1930s that they should ignore the portraits of writers like Denifle and Grisar. /13

The great break-through came in 1939-40, just as Europe plunged into the maelstrom of the Second World War, with the publication of Joseph Lortz's Die Reformation in Deutschland. Even though most Europeans had other things to think about, Lortz's two volume study caused a stir. It has been described as treating Luther no longer as a demon to be exorcized but a fellow-Christian to be understood.

In keeping with contemporary fashions in historical scholarship Lortz rejected the simplistic idea that Luther could be held personally responsible for the Reformation - the 'great man' theory of history - though he acknowledged that the impact of his remarkable personality and experience was important. 'The Reformation', he judged, 'was caused by the disintegration of the basic principles and basic forms upon which the medieval world was built'. /14 More controversially he considered that the Roman Curia was as much to blame as Luther for the schism which took place - a view which, incidentally, had been anticipated a century before by the famous Anglican convert to Roman Catholicism, John Henry Newman. /15

Lortz had no doubt that Luther was a man of God and a Christian, but he had his own criticisms of the Reformer. He charged him with subjectivism, placing his personal interpretation of Scripture above the teaching authority of the Church and his own understanding of the Gospel above the teaching of Scripture when it seemed to be against him. This led to one-sidedness which exaggerated one aspect of Christian truth at the expense of the whole. Lortz also considered that Luther was guilty of a renunciation of reason in turning his back upon the great Christian tradition of rational theology to embrace a religion of feeling and experience. /16

Luther was not wholly culpable, however, in Lortz's view, for what he rejected as Catholicism was not truly Catholic. Lortz considered that Luther was absolutely right in his attack on Indulgences in 1517 and Leo X and Albert of Brandenburg absolutely wrong: 'Corruption could scarcely have been more blatantly expressed', he wrote. 'Anyone can see that the whole affair was utterly at war with the Spirit of Christ'. /17

Lortz became Director of the Institute of European History at the University of Mainz and influenced a number of scholars who worked under him. His own research and writing on Luther and the Reformation continued. In 1965, in an essay entitled 'The basic elements of Luther's Intellectual Style' which he contributed to a Festschrift for Hubert Jedin, he wrote:

Thirty years ago in The Reformation in Germany I put forth the thesis with regard to the central Reformation article, justification by faith alone, that Luther had rediscovered an old Catholic doctrine which was new for him and seen onesidedly. In fact Luther was more Catholic than I then imagined. /18

Lortz expressed his conviction that Catholics were coming to recognise 'the Christian, even the Catholic richness of Luther' and, conscious of their guilt in having expelled him from the Church, were anxious to draw his richness back into the Church. /19 He suggested that Catholics could sometimes understand Luther better than Protestants could, a thought which has been echoed by Professor J. J. Scarisbrick, the recent biographer of Henry VIII, in his view that Catholics who have taken to heart the message of Vatican II were particularly well equipped to study the Reformation with compassion and objectivity. /20

Lortz has argued that Luther's 'no' to the sixteenth century papal church needs to be re-examined for it was the rejection of a sub-Christian reality which was not Catholicism, and he cited in support of his view a statement by Roger Schutz of the Protestant community of Taizé that Luther would have thanked God for Vatican II's expression of the Catholic Church's repentance and faith. /21

Some of Lortz's students have gone on to take the dialogue between their Church and Luther a stage further. One of these is Professor Erwin Iserloh who has raised a question mark over the familiar story of Luther nailing his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle church at Wittenberg. According to Iserloh it was Melancthon and not Luther himself who told the story and that it did not circulate until after Luther's death. /22 Iserloh presents Luther as a prophetic figure who sought to recall the Church to the truth of the Gospel which is that Christ Himself must be at work in us before we can work for Him. /23

Otto Pesch, O.P., has compared the theologies of Luther and Thomas Aquinas, which he has labelled respectively, 'Existential' and 'Sapiential' theologies. He has tried to show that what appear to be contradictions between these two theologies tend to dissolve on closer examination. Aquinas might have rejected Luther's paradoxical understanding of the Christian as simul iustus et peccator but he himself would have accepted that a Christian can sin and be forgiven. Pesch concluded that the two ways of doing theology are complementary rather than contradictory and that the Church needs both if it is to live out all the tensions involved in being Christian. /24

Another of Lortz's pupils is Peter Manns who has recently published a new biography of Luther. /25 Manns believes that the sixteenth century distinction between Roman Catholic and Protestant is

no longer valid, that Luther represented an authentic aspect of Catholic tradition. In a careful study of Luther's lectures on Galatians in the late 1530s he argued that Luther did not reject entirely all human co-operation with divine grace in the process of salvation, what he did insist upon was that man's co-operation in the process of his salvation was totally dependent upon grace. /26

Thus Lortz's pupils have gone beyond their master, in the view of a distinguished contemporary Reformation scholar, Steven Ozment, who has suggested that while Lortz's Luther was sincere, but still a heretic, in his pupil's work Luther is no longer properly heretical./27

Not long after the publication of Lortz's original magisterial work on the Reformation in Germany another German Roman Catholic scholar, Adolf Herte of Paderborn, published a detailed review of Roman Catholic Luther historiography, showing that the influence of Cochlaeus had cast a long shadow over Catholic thinking about the Reformer. At the same time he appealed for a reciprocal gesture from Protestants, inviting them to repudiate the misrepresentations of Roman Catholicism in much Protestant and anti-Catholic polemic. /28

The work of historians has contributed to changing attitudes on the part of theologians, who have also been increasingly aware of, and responsive to, what has been going on on the other side of the ecclesiastical divide.

Karl Adam of Tübingen was early in the field, in 1947, crediting Luther with 'an original understanding of the essence of Christianity' and paying tribute to 'his unfathomable reverence for the mystery of God, his tremendous consciousness of his own sin, the holy defiance with which, as God's warrior, he faced abuse and simony, the heroism with which he risked his life for Christ's cause and, not least, the natural simplicity and child-like quality of his personal piety'. /29 Adam, however, like Lortz, saw Luther as a tragic figure who had lost his way, taking up a subjective position against the authority of the Church and falling into errors as when he exaggerated the depravity of fallen man and the spiritual impotence of his will.

Probably the best known progressive Roman Catholic theologian of the post Second World War period has been Hans Küng, also of Tübingen. In his treatment of the doctrine of Justification he argues that there is no longer any real reason for disagreement between Roman Catholics

and Protestants on 'the article of a standing or falling church'. He considers that there is no essential difference between the doctrine of Karl Barth, which he takes to be a modern statement of Luther's doctrine, and his own interpretation of Catholic teaching. /30

Just as the older negative Roman Catholic view of Luther reached the general public through popular publications, the newer, more positive views of Lortz and Jedin soon began to receive wider publicity. In 1961 a German Benedictine, Thomas Sartory, broadcast on Bavarian radio a series of lectures, later published as Martin Luther in the View of Catholics. Repudiating the character assassination of the past he insisted that Luther had something to say to Roman Catholics:

the Luther who speaks of man's Christian existence, who expressed his personal experience of God, who explains Holy Scripture, who proclaims the Word with untiring voice, who expresses his adoration in his hymns ... we in the Catholic world do not want to be without this spiritual man, this pastor and preacher. /31

The theologian Karl Rahner expressed his approval of Sartory's broadcasts, in spite of what he considered to be the error of some of Luther's teachings and acknowledged that Roman Catholic theologians could learn much from the Reformer, who had not been specifically condemned by the Council of Trent. /32

So far our attention has been focussed largely upon German scholars but parallel developments could be found in France, Holland and the U.S.A.

As early as 1937, that is, before the publication of Lortz's magnum opus, the eminent French theologian, Yves Congar, in a book entitled Chrétiens Désunis, published in English as Divided Christendom, argued that there was no future for Roman Catholic/Protestant dialogue unless Catholics took the trouble to understand Luther and do justice to him historically and stopped simply condemning him, though he considered that Luther had erred through his subjectivism and individualism. /33

Louis Bouyer, a convert to Roman Catholicism himself, has been another French advocate of the more positive Roman Catholic approach to

Luther. Like K  ng he can see nothing un-Catholic about Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. He does not share Lortz's and Congar's suspicions about Luther's subjectivism, considering that Luther was responding in a personal way to the transcendent reality of Christ. For him Luther's error came in his failure to recognise the objective value of the sacraments, his disparagement of human good works and his refusal to obey ecclesiastical authority. /34

More recently Luther studies have been enriched by the publications of Daniel Olivier, an Assumptionist Father and professor at the Institut Sup  rieur d'  tudes Oecumiques in Paris. His eminently readable Trial of Luther has been hailed by its English translator, Dr John Tonkin, of the University of Western Australia, as an excellent example of the way in which recent Roman Catholic writings about Luther have been distinguished, not by any specifically Catholic perspective, but simply by their intrinsic qualities of historical and theological insight. /35

He has also given us, in 1982, Luther's Faith. The Cause of the Gospel in the Church in which he has expressed his conviction that Luther recovered the essence of the gospel in the sixteenth century and that the Council of Trent responded too negatively and legalistically to his protest. He finds a more positive response in Vatican II and, like Otto Pesch, he advocates complementarity in the Roman Catholic/Protestant relationship, rather than conflict.

Thomas McDonough, whose The Law and the Gospel in Luther was published by the Oxford University Press in 1963, is one of a number of American Roman Catholic scholars who have contributed to the modern Roman Catholic understanding of Luther.

In an essay entitled 'The Essential Martin Luther', published in 1969, he argued that Luther was responsible for saving the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century by forcing it to embark upon a path of reformation which it is still following. 'There is a growing consensus among Catholic scholars', he wrote, 'that Martin Luther, on the fundamental issue of the Reformation was absolutely right', and he identifies that issue as the sovereignty of God. /36 Luther proclaimed what he called 'an entirely orthodox and truly Catholic doctrine, namely, that God alone, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, creates, redeems and sanctifies man and it is here that he finds the essential Luther - Luther the Reformer. /37

In spite of his all too human failings Luther was a genuinely religious man and that is how he should be understood. Luther was a preacher rather than a systematic theologian and when Catholic scholars translated the dynamic, experiential language of the prophet into the logical categories of scholasticism they produced contradictions and absurdities which they rejected. But Luther's overriding concern was soteriological, his conviction that only the power of God could save sinful man led him to over-emphasise the corruption of human nature making man seem less than a person when what he was really saying was that every attempt by man to establish his own righteousness must end in failure. /38

McDonough is only one of many Roman Catholic scholars in the United States who are contributing to the new Roman Catholic view of Luther. Another is Paul Tavad, who has recently been quoted as stating that 'today, many Catholic scholars think Luther was right and the sixteenth century Catholic polemicists did not understand what he meant'. /39

Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians in America have recently released the text of the results of a five year study of the doctrine of justification by faith, so divisive in the sixteenth century and a common declaration of their agreement that 'our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ alone'.

The fact that the new Roman Catholic view of Luther and the Reformation is percolating into popular history can be seen from a book like A Concise History of the Catholic Church by Thomas Bokenkotter, first published in the United States in 1977. Dealing with the Reformation Bokenkotter quotes modern Catholic scholars who find much that was Catholic and Christian in Luther /40, and declares:

One of the tragedies of the affair was that, from the beginning, Luther's opponents refused to meet him on theological and scriptural grounds... The only occasion for calm debate was furnished by Luther's fellow Augustinians at their Chapter at Heidelberg in 1518 where Luther won over the majority to his view. /41

An English Roman Catholic biographer of Luther who has popularised the modern positive approach to the Reformer is J.M.Todd, who has been

greatly influenced by the work of Lortz, and also by the Methodist scholar, Gordon Rupp. Todd's biography, originally published in 1964 has reappeared recently in a revised edition. While insisting that Luther was too complex for simplistic judgments his impression of him is 'of a man driven by a passion for the Divine, driven, too, by horror of evil, convinced of its eventual futility'. /42 He presents him as a man of prayer under whose impact the Christianity of Europe began to look more like the gospel of the New Testament, though, in the end the Reformer's church became as narrow and legalistic as the papal church had been, if not more so. /43

If any doubt remains that the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to Luther has changed it must have finally been dispelled by the decision of the present Pope, John Paul, to attend a Lutheran church service in Rome in 1983, the year in which the quincentenary of Luther's birth is being celebrated, and to address the congregation. Perhaps the suggestion of some years ago of Jaroslav Pelikan that Luther should be canonised by the Roman Catholic Church is not so far-fetched after all!

Finally let us consider a Protestant response to indications that there has been a change in Roman Catholic attitudes to Luther and the Reformation. James Atkinson, formerly Professor of Theology at the University of Sheffield, is an Anglican Evangelical and prominent Luther scholar. He considers that the changed attitude of Roman Catholic scholars to Luther is symptomatic of changes which have been taking place in modern Roman Catholicism and which provide an opportunity for a new and creative dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics. His opinions have been expressed in the Foreword to a new edition of his Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism and in his Rome and Reformation Today: how Luther speaks to the new situation, both published in 1982.

Atkinson believes that, not only have distinguished Roman Catholic scholars given their opinion that Leo X made a ghastly mistake in his response to Luther in the sixteenth century but that the Roman Church, in the Second Vatican Council, has, to a large extent, abandoned its sixteenth century posture and its old language of anathema and condemnation and has begun to speak what he calls 'the plain, vital and dynamic language of the bible, unchallengeable in its authority, creative in its testimony'. /44

Atkinson argues that the great issues raised by Luther were faced by Vatican II in a simple historical, biblical way and that the Council could yet issue in the kind of Reformation Luther sought. /45

At the same time he is not naively optimistic. He acknowledges that the documents of Vatican II do not speak with one voice and that much of the old theology of Trent and Vatican I is re-affirmed alongside the newer insights. /46 Nevertheless he is hopeful because the developments which are clearly expressed in the Vatican II documents are endorsed by 'the weighty decisions of a world gathering of the Council Fathers' and are no longer simply the views of a few avant garde scholars. /47

In particular he regards Vatican II's decree on Ecumenism with its recognition of the authentically Christian character of non-Roman communions as a radical departure from previous statements, authoritatively made, which described Protestants as heretics outside the Christian fold. /48 The new emphasis is on the need for common penitence and mutual forgiveness which provides us with an occasion of hope.

Both traditions have taken wrong paths since the sixteenth century divide. Protestantism has been bedevilled by fissiparous tendencies, the consequence of excessive individualism and also from 'liberalising' tendencies which have led to a loss of distinctively Christian commitment. /49 In his view the Roman tradition's rejection of Luther deprived it of its rightful biblical and evangelical heritage, its negative exclusivism robbed it of true catholicity, it became authoritarian rather than authoritative, but, for all its faults and deficiencies, it has, in areas of Christian spirituality and ethics, remained more faithful to Christianity than has Liberal Protestantism. /50

It would demand much from both traditions to respond to the challenge of the present situation and perhaps neither is capable of rising to that challenge but Atkinson believes:

History is asking us now whether we know what the Gospel truly is and truly means. The answer to this question will take the combined resources of all Christendom to receive from God nothing less than the penitent purification of all the people of God and a Pentecostal movement that will sweep through our churches and make us all one in Christ. /51

NOTES

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5. Ibid., p.23.
6. R.Stauffer, Luther as seen by Catholics (London, 1967), p.14.
7. Ibid., pp 15-16.
8. R.E.J.McNally, 'The Reformation: A Catholic Reappraisal' in J.C.Olin, J.D.Smart and R.E.McNally (eds) Luther, Erasmus and the Reformation (New York, 1969), p.36.
9. P.F.O'Hare, The Facts about Martin Luther (New York and Cincinnati, 1916), pp 257 and 357.
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11. F.W.Meuser, The Changing Catholic View of Luther. Will Rome take him back? (Minneapolis, 1969).
12. Stauffer, pp 37-9.
13. Ibid., p.39
14. Lortz, I, 8.
15. Stauffer, p.40.
16. Lortz, I, 442-4, 455-8, 471-7; II, 340-1.
17. Ibid., I, 226.
18. E.Iserloh and K.Reppen (eds), Reformata Reformanda (Munster, 1965) I, 217. An English translation in Jared Wicks (ed), Catholic Scholars' Dialogue with Luther (Chicago, 1970), pp 4-33.
19. Ibid., I, 217; Wicks, p.7.
20. Ibid., p.6; J.J.Scarisbrick
21. Ibid., p.33.
22. E.Iserloh, Luther zwischen Reform und Reformation (Munster, 1966); Wicks.
23. Wicks, p.57.

24. 'Luther and Aquinas', in Wicks pp 59 ff. See also O.H.Pesch 'Twenty Years of Catholic Luther Research', Lutheran World XIII (1966) 303-16.
25. P.Manns, Martin Luther 1983.
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28. A.Herte, Das katholische Lutherbild im Pann der Luther-kommentare des Cochlaüs (Munster, 1943); Stauffer, pp 42-4.
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30. H.Küng, Justification (London, 1964), pp 262-71.
31. Stauffer, p.53.
32. Ibid., p.54.
33. Ibid., pp 76-7.
34. L.Bouyer, The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism (London, 1956).
35. D.Olivier, The Trial of Luther (Oxford 1978), p.ix
36. J.T.McDonough, 'The Essential Luther' in Olin, Smart and McNally, p.59.
37. Ibid., p.60.
38. Ibid., pp 63-5.
39. Time, 17 October 1983, p.52.
40. T.Bokenkotter, A Concise History of the Catholic Church (New York, 1979), p.221.
41. Ibid, p.225.
42. J.M.Todd, Luther: A Life, p.373.
43. Ibid., p.372.
44. J.Atkinson, Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism (London, 1982), pp xxii-xxiii.
45. Ibid., p.xxiv and J.Atkinson, Rome and Reformation today (Oxford, 1982), p.31.

46. Rome and Reformation today, p.5. It must also be said that not all Roman Catholic writers on Luther take the modern positive attitude to the Reformer. Paul Hacker, The Ego in Faith: Martin Luther and the Origin of Anthropocentric Religion (Chicago, 1970), takes Lortz's criticisms of Luther's subjectivism a stage further and, in Germany, Remigius Bäumer has recently shown in his biography of Cochlaeus (Aschendorff, 1980) that the tradition associated with Luther's sixteenth century assailant is not dead and buried. See G.Widermann 'Cochlaeus as a Polemicist' in P.N. Brooks, op. cit., pp 204-5.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., pp 5-7.
49. Ibid., p.22.
50. Ibid., p.33 and Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism, p.xxiii.
51. Ibid., p.28.

THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH'S WITNESS : OBSERVATIONS ON ACTS 1 : 6 - 8

David Hill

Of Acts 1:6-8 the Jerome Biblical Commentary says, 'The verses strike the keynote of the Acts of the Apostles'. /1 It is the purpose of this essay to show that at the outset of his second volume Luke formulated in these three verses the main themes of his theology and, secondly, that this theology continues to have vital significance for the Church of today. This we shall attempt to do, first, by offering an exegesis of the text, and then by situating the results of that exegesis in the context of Luke's theology.

I EXEGESISV.6 : *Lord, will you at this time restore the kingship to Israel?*

This question of the disciples comes between two statements of the risen Lord which promise the coming of the Holy Spirit (vs. 5 and 8). It is an example of a literary device which is fairly common in the New Testament. It is a kind of paedagogical question intended to call for definition or precision by pointing out possible misunderstandings: the device is found frequently in John's gospel (3:4; 6:60; 8:22,33; 11:12; 13:36) and occurs also in Luke's work (Lk.1:34; 7:23; cf.22:24; Acts 2:37; 7:1; 17:19). As formulated, the disciples' question in Acts 1:6 calls for a substantial amount of restatement. In point of fact, each of its terms refers to a specific misunderstanding which will be cleared up in Jesus' reply. The words 'at this time' imply the illusion of an imminent eschatology, to which Jesus responds with 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority'. 'To restore the kingship, or the kingdom (tēn basileian)' expresses the political misconception by which the entire cause of Jesus is reduced to a matter of zealotism, of struggle against the Roman occupying forces. Jesus will reply: 'You will receive the Holy Spirit': his promise and that of the Father did not envisage the mere restoration of a certain political set-up, but the radical newness of the Spirit in action and in experience. The words 'to Israel' imply a viewpoint which remains closed within the narrow confines of exclusivism: Israel is regarded as the only object of messianic salvation. This exclusivism will be countered by the perspectives opened up in v.8: not only Jerusalem and Judea, but Samaria and the very ends of the earth.

The three-fold misunderstanding which receives expression in v.6 corresponded to existing currents of thought in the Christian community as Luke knew it. The eschatological illusion, for instance, is witnessed to in 1 Thessalonians in which, interestingly, the same words appear as in Acts 1:7 ('times and seasons', kairous kai chronous) to designate a major concern among the Thessalonian believers ('as to the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you', Thess.5:1). These words had become a standard phrase to express the anxiety of the early Christians, eagerly waiting for the return of the Lord, analysing the possible signs, computing delays and trying to work out a time-table for the second advent.

The restoration of kingship was an important focus for the aspirations of the Judeo-Christians, one which they shared with their Jewish brothers. If, with many commentators, we accept that the Acts of the Apostles was written in the eighties of the first Christian century, then we may perceive here a reaction to the traumatic events which reached their climax in 70 A.D. - the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple and the termination of Temple-worship. This raises the interesting question as to what might have been the attitude of Luke to the Judeo-Christians. Though traditionally Luke is known as a Gentile, he shows in his work an unashamed sympathy for, almost a bias towards, the people of Israel. /2 Whatever may have been the form and extent of Luke's contacts with Judeo-Christians, Acts 1:6 implies a nationalistic and eschatological fervour, an apocalyptic stance, which is also evidenced in such texts as the Magnificat (Lk.1:46-55) and the Benedictus (Lk.1:68-79) and which constitutes part of the background of the book of the Revelation.

v.7: It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.

The connotation of the phrase 'times and seasons' has already been indicated above. When comparing Acts 1:7 with 1 Thess.5:1f. another observation comes to mind. Both texts put the same question in the same terms, i.e. when is the End to come. But the answers given differ. 1 Thessalonians warns that early Christian community not to be lulled to sleep and inactivity by the delay of the expected Parousia. The day of the Lord is coming, they are told: indeed, it is here already, dawning upon them. They are already 'sons of the day, not of the night'(5:5). The answer in Acts 1 is different. The problem of computing times and seasons is to be set aside: the matter is in the hands of the Lord.

What concerns the believers is to realise that, in the meantime, a mission remains to be accomplished: 'you shall be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth'. The standpoint of 1 Thessalonians remains eschatological: it is that of an expectation turned towards the future. The viewpoint of Acts is ecclesiological: it is turned towards the present and the task incumbent on the Church during the present period: the future is another matter, escaping, even defying human reckoning.

*v.8: You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit
is come upon you*

The time between the first and the second coming of the Lord is marked by the activity of the Holy Spirit coming upon and working through the disciples. If the previous period was the period of Jesus, the present one is that of the Spirit, and the Spirit is a power (dunamis) energizing the disciples. The Church is not at all caught within the perspectives of idle expectation. The time of the Church is a time loaded with power, given for mission. In God's plan of salvation, the time of Jesus was not the end: much remains to be done after his departure.

On the other hand, the time of the Church or the time of the Spirit does not represent something discontinuous with what went before. There is a significant parallelism between Acts 1:7, introducing the force at work in the Church, and Luke 1:35, describing the Christ who is to be born.

Luke 1 : 35

The Holy Spirit

will come upon thee (epeleusetai)

and the power (dunamis)

of the Most High will overshadow thee:

that holy thing to be born will be
called
(the) son of God.

Acts 1 : 7

the Holy Spirit

coming upon you (epelthontos)...

You shall receive power(dunamis)

and you shall be my

witnesses...

The parallelism is striking and can hardly be coincidental or casual. It is reinforced by the fact that in these two verses only is the verb 'to come upon' (eperchesthai) used of the Holy Spirit: elsewhere the Spirit is said to 'come down', 'fill', 'be poured out', 'be sent', 'be given' or 'be received'. The significance of the parallelism is clear: whether it be in the case of Jesus, to make him son of God, or of the disciples to make them witnesses, the same dynamism of the same Spirit is at work, the same divine purpose drives the human actors towards and in their divinely-given role.

You shall be my witnesses

'Witness' is a favourite term of Luke. He uses it nine times (twice in the Gospel and seven times in Acts) in the nominal agent form (martus: the one who gives witness), five times in the nominal passive form (twice in Acts and three times in the Gospel), marturion, witness given to a fact or event; once in the form marturia, with the same meaning, and fourteen times (all but one in Acts) in the verbal form (martureo and marturesthai). The significance of the word becomes clear when we compare the Lucan form of the missionary command with that of Mark and Matthew.

Mark says, 'Go into the world and proclaim the good news to all creatures' (Mark 16:15) /3. The evangelical activity given to the disciples is described by the verb kērusso, 'to announce, proclaim, lit. to herald'. What is envisaged in the Marcan missionary command is a 'heralding' or 'kerygmatic' activity. The grace of God at work in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ is good news. And good news needs no further demonstration: it simply has to be communicated. The missionary activity of the disciples has only to release, by proclamation the power of the Good News: the rest will follow of itself.

Matthew has the command in the form, 'Make disciples ...' (mathēteusate), 28:19. There is an implicit but clearly perceptible allusion to the process of training disciples, of initiating them into a deeper understanding of the truth - a mental attitude and a corresponding style of life. Jewish tradition knew well the slow process by which the rabbi trained his disciples (talmidim), a process which had much in common with the guru relationship in Indian tradition. The form of the missionary command in Matthew betrays the awareness that mission has to be pursued beyond the initial act of faith. If the 'kerygma' leads to the acceptance of faith, a long process follows in the making of a true disciple.

Luke's choice of the word 'witness' suggests another aspect of the communication of the Christian message. The communication will be through words and deeds. In Acts 2 the action of the Spirit makes Peter speak, but it also brings into existence a community whose 'grace-full' manner of life attracts others. If the speech of Peter brings to faith three thousand souls (v.41), the life and example of the early community draws many 'day by day' (v.47). The word 'witness' expresses all the varied forms of the communication of the Christian message through words and deeds.

While there is agreement between the evangelists that the resurrection experience gave the disciples a missionary awareness, the way in which that awareness is described by the Synoptists reflects the growth of missionary experience itself and also the growth of a theology of mission.

*in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and
to the ends of the earth.*

We have here a broad plan for the programme of the book of Acts as a whole.

Chapters	1 - 7	narrate the Jerusalem ministry;
"	8 - 12	show the Good News taken to Judea and Samaria through Philip and Peter;
"	13 - 28	follow Paul, going to the extremities of the earth, indeed up even to Rome. /4

The coming of the Spirit opens up new perspectives which are not only geographical areas, but new human and cultural horizons for mission.

II ACTS 1 : 6 - 8 AS A THEOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

The preceding analysis of Acts 1:6-8 shows that the short dialogue in these three verses is filled with rich theological overtones. In fact, this short passage contains a synthesis of Luke's basic theological insights. An exposition of these insights will therefore constitute a general delineation of Luke's theology.

1. A Time for the Church

We pointed out the difference between the viewpoint of Paul in 1 Thess. 5 and that of Luke. Whereas Paul still turns the eyes of the readers towards the return of Christ, Luke is reconciled to the prospect of a long time-gap. The End is not imminent. To use the phraseology of H. Conzelmann, for Luke Jesus is not the end, but the mid-point of time. /5 The time of Jesus is still to be followed by the time of the Church (as it was preceded by the time of Israel). This time is no mere time of expectation, a time that would contain nothing but the emptiness of absence; rather, it is a time inhabited by a purpose, a programme and the responsibility of action to be accomplished. Like the time of promise and the time of Jesus, the time of the Church brings a positive element to the fulfilment of God's purpose and plan. Whereas Paul, and many in the early Church, viewed their present situation as an eschatological period in which the grace of God had broken into the human condition, breaking the hold of evil forces, dissipating darkness and bringing about a new man, a new earth and new heavens in the once-for-allness of an irreversible action, Luke introduces again the perspectives of history, of an on-going process of human action and becoming. The death and resurrection of Christ did not usher in the End, but a new stage in salvation history. And that is precisely why Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles. It was not just a matter of historical thoroughness, of completing the account of the origins of the Christian movement. The Acts of the Apostles has a theological purpose. It illustrates Luke's conviction that the cause of Christ is now to be carried forward in a time-bound history.

2. A Time for Witnessing

The main activity to be carried out during the period of the Church is witness to the resurrection. In this respect Luke is in fundamental agreement with Mark (13:10), Matthew (28:19) and Paul (Rom. 15: 16-21), but he is more fully aware that this is an activity which is likely to be spread over a long period, since it has already been carried out by the apostolic generation (the Twelve: Acts 1-12) and the sub-apostolic successors (represented by Paul: Acts 13-28). /6

Luke would not share Paul's confidence that 'their voice has (already) gone out to all the earth' (Rom. 10:18): the ends of the earth are, for Luke, still far distant, it would appear. That is why the book of Acts remains unfinished. This has been the subject of much

discussion among the commentators and many hypotheses have been put forward to account for it. /7 But the main point of the abrupt conclusion is precisely that it is not an ending. The story continues. The nations will listen. Paul speaks freely in Rome (Acts 28: 28-31). But more is to follow. A complete period is still to come, with its own tasks, its own troubles implied in Paul's farewell speech in Acts 20 : 18-36 which, in a way, might be considered as a kind of historical conclusion to the report of Acts.

As well as making it clear that the power of the Good News is at work in this period, Luke also shows that it enters into all the various aspects of the life of a community (Acts 2: 42-47). The word of the Good News takes flesh and bone in the diverse activities of those who relay the message and bear witness to it. The 'word of God' is so identified with its embodiment in the life and witness of the community that the 'word' is said to 'grow' (6:7; 12:24; 19:20) like a body, like a people (cf. Acts 7:7). On this point we could contrast Luke with Paul for whom the word of the Gospel is 'power' (Rom. 1: 16), like a powder keg: it can be carried, it is not expected to grow. Or, again, it is a reality coming down from heaven and given to be either accepted or rejected (Rom. 10:6-13). In Luke, on the contrary, the 'word' assumes the rhythms and the risks of human existence.

3. The Time of the Church

Although he uses the word ekklesiā frequently, Luke is not much concerned about the structures of the Church: the churches he describes have different forms of structure. /8 Yet he has a clearly delineated theology of the Church. For him God's plan revealed in Jesus Christ is to be furthered through a process of historical mediation, /9 and through the exercise of human responsibilities. And that is precisely what the Church is about. For this reason Luke has been accused of Frühkatholizismus, of early catholicising tendencies. /10 While it may be true that Luke's theology of salvation-history opens the way for the growth of early catholicism, his own writing does not lay stress on the church as an institution developing rigid forms of organisation and alone dispensing salvation. /11 Throughout the book of Acts the Church remains a Church under the word, a community of believers called by God to proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus. This point has been recently stated well by J.A.Fitzmyer:

He [Luke] sees the Church as the locus in which the Word of God is rightly preached and in which salvation in the name of Jesus is offered to human beings. ... If, in the Lucan view of things, salvation comes to human beings through the Church, through the organised Christian community, that is because in it the Word of God is rightly preached and baptism is conferred 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'. /12

True, Luke is not afraid of seeing the Church embarking upon the ambiguities of human history - that is indeed the meaning of the Acts of the Apostles - but that is far from entailing the formalism of early catholicism. The Church, for Luke, is the human locus of evangelism and mission.

4. The Time of the Spirit

But, for Luke, the Church is not left alone to face the vicissitudes and risks of human history. The Church is in and lives by the power of the Spirit. This does not mean only that the Church receives the help of the Holy Spirit: the implication is rather that the Spirit is the main hero of the story. In terms of structuralist analysis of the story, it is not the apostles who are the 'actors', while the Holy Spirit is the 'adjuvant', but rather the opposite. The apostles, the co-workers and successors are energised and directed by the Spirit. We might almost say that they were manipulated by the Spirit when we read how Paul is led to exercise his ministry in Europe in Acts 16:6-10. The very beginning of Paul's missionary undertaking is traced back to an intervention of the Holy Spirit: 'The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"', 13:2. Indeed the whole movement that took the apostles out of the Upper Room into the streets of Jerusalem and, later on, to the roads of Judea and Samaria, finally to reach the ends of the earth, originated in the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (2:1-13).

The time of the Church is, first and last, the time of the Spirit. Now, to say that the present age is the time of the Spirit is another way of saying that it is not the time of Jesus. Whereas Matthew concludes his gospel with the dominical promise 'I am with you always, to the close of the age' - which implies that Jesus' presence merges into history, so to speak, into the lives of the commissioned - Luke's account ends with a description of the departure of Jesus: 'he parted

from them and was carried up into heaven' (Lk.24:51) /13. Luke never says in the book of Acts that Christ is at work in the Church. This does not mean that Jesus has simply disappeared: his influence is still exercised through his name (Acts 3: 6,16; 4:10,18; 8:12; 16:18), his power (4:7) and his Spirit (16:7). But the Spirit of Jesus is not simply Jesus. It is both less and more than Jesus. The Spirit is less than Jesus since, in the present period, the physicality of contact with the Lord is lost: even Paul, who met the risen Christ on the way to Damascus, does not enjoy the same kind of unmistakeable experience as was given to the Twelve (contrast Acts 9:3-5 and Lk.24:39-43). Yet the Spirit is at the same time more than Jesus in the sense that in and by the power and presence of the Spirit the Church - the community of Jesus - is able to reach to the ends of the earth where it meets the culture of Athens (Acts 17:22-31) and the formidable power of the Pax Romana (Acts 28:30-31). In a sense Luke's conception is close to John's impressive statement: 'He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. ... And I will pray the Father and he will give you another Paraclete/Counsellor to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth' (Jn.14:12,16-17). The Spirit is the power and presence of Jesus released from the constrictions of place and time to be with and among his followers everywhere and always.

CONCLUSION

At the outset, then, of his second volume, Luke gives us the basic co-ordinates of the position we are in - the Spirit, the mission, the Church. We are given, straight away, the vigorous outlines of a theology of the Spirit, of mission and of the Church, all three converging into one theology of history.

For Luke, the Church is the milieu in which the encounter of the Spirit with human history chiefly takes place. On the one hand, the Church cannot claim immunity from the risks and ambiguities of human history, but, on the other hand, the Church, in time and space, is also energised by the power of the living Spirit of God. Secondly, the Church finds her identity and unity in that march forward in which the people of God is continuously called to go beyond itself, to shake off all its securities, and ever to start again 'towards the ends of the earth'. And, thirdly, the Church is mission, and the mission is nothing but the dynamism of the Spirit at work through the mediation of a

pneumatic community. And if, unlike John, Luke - who speaks so often of the Spirit - never gives a description or a definition of what the Spirit is, it is because the Church in Acts presents a living image of the dynamism and the newness of life which the Spirit signifies.

The message of Luke is that the Spirit has entered upon the arena of human history and activity and has made it, at least potentially, a sphere of salvation. Human witness and work, whether it be in the form of proclaiming the Good News, praying, or exercising the diakonia for the poor, becomes the work of the Spirit. And, just as in the life of Israel, according to the Old Testament, God accepts the risks of sharing in human affairs, so now, through the Church in the power of the Spirit, he continues to entrust himself, his purpose and its realisation, to the hearts and hands of men.

NOTES

1. R.J.Dillon and J.A.Fitzmyer, 'The Acts of the Apostles' in The Jerome Biblical Commentary (London; Chapman, 1968), p.169 of N.T. section.
2. Cf.J.Jervell, Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts (Minneapolis; Augsburg Press, 1972). In the introduction to his recent commentary on The Gospel of Luke I-IX (Anchor Bible series, vol.23: New York; Doubleday and Co., 1981) J.A.Fitzmyer argues that Luke was a gentile Christian, but not a Greek: rather he was a native Syrian inhabitant of Antioch, a non-Jew from a Semitic cultural background (pp 42-47). For Fitzmyer's comments on Jervell's work, see ibid., p.191.
3. This passage belongs to the so-called 'long ending' of Mark, which is of doubtful authenticity. But commentators do observe that, even though the text is not Markan, it is remarkably faithful to the perspectives of Mark. In The Last Twelve Verses of Mark (SNTS Monograph series, Vol.25: Cambridge Press, 1974) W.R.Farmer observes that to euangelion is used here, as in Paul, in an absolute way (cf.Mk.1:15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9) and goes on to say, 'This is distinctive of Mark among the evangelists... Matthew never uses the expression, nor does John. Luke never uses it though it occurs once in Acts 15:7. The presence here of to euangelion, used absolutely, constitutes a strong linguistic tie between Mk.1:1 - 16:8 and 16:9-20' (p.94).

4. Cf. W.C. van Unnik, 'Der Ausdruck hēos escc_hatou tēs gēs (Apg.i.8) und sein alttestamentlicher Hintergrund', in Studia Biblica et Semitica (Festschrift for T.C.Vriezen:Wageningen, 1966) pp 335-349.
5. According to the title of the famous study by Conzelmann, Die Mitte der Zeit (Tübingen; Mohr, 5th ed. 1964), translated into English under the less impressive title The Theology of St. Luke (Faber and Faber, 1960).
6. Cf. C. H. Talbert, Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts (SBL Monograph series, vol.20: Missoula, Scholars Press, 1974), pp 99-107.
7. See the summary of opinions in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p.214 of N.T. section.
8. Cf. F.Bovon, Luc le Théologien (Neuchâtel: Delachaux - Niestlé, 1976) pp 362-403.
9. See F.Bovon, 'L'Importance des Médiations dans le projet théologique de Luc', NTS 21 (1974-75), pp 23-39.
10. Cf. E.Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes (London; SCM Press, 1964) pp 136-148.
11. 'If there is no salvation extra ecclesiam it is not because the church possesses the gospel, but because salvation is through Christ, and His word is committed to the apostles': I.H.Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian (Exeter, Devon; Paternoster Press, 1970), p.214.
12. J.A.Fitzmyer, The Gospel of Luke I-IX, pp 256, 257.
13. The second clause of this verse is of doubtful authenticity. The United Bible Societies edition of the Greek New Testament has given it only a 'D' rating (i.e. 'a very high degree of doubt'). It was omitted in previous editions of the Nestle text but reinstated in the latest (26th) edition by K.Aland. See the discussion of the evidence in A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament by B.M.Metzger (London and New York: UBS, 1971) pp 189-90. If we accept the short reading, Luke's Gospel ends with the stark statement that Jesus has gone. In Acts 1:9 the account of the ascension makes it also a departure rather than a glorious exaltation: 'a cloud took him away from their sight'.

IF CHRISTIANS REFUSE TO ACT, THEN CHRIST IS NOT RISEN.***

Once more 1 Corinthians 15

Guy Wagner

Some time ago I edited a thesis and published a booklet on the resurrection /1, and ever since chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians continues to fascinate me. So I was very interested in an article by Simone Frutiger which appeared in Études théologiques et religieuses (1980:2:199). I quite agree with her that the central issue dealt with in this passage is more the Christian life than the after life. I find her formula really excellent: 'imaginer le même et le recevoir autre' (213) i.e. imagine the same thing and receive it differently for defining hopes based on the resurrection. Her method of repeating the theme throughout the whole chapter appears to me very illuminating in its clarity.

I do not, however, share her point of view when she states that 'Paul tries to rid the Corinthians of foolish questions on the resurrection of the dead... which hinder them from living' (226). The aim Paul pursues is not, in my opinion, to correct mistakes in the direction of their thought by 'making a way between categories of event, symbol and myth', but rather to take issue with an attitude which he found unacceptable. The chapter has a greater unity than that granted by Simone Frutiger and the great majority of commentators. Since it is her wish 'to encourage others to take up the issue, pursue it and correct it... .' (199), let us take up the challenge! In any case, is it not worthwhile to give a new momentum to theological and exegetical research by stimulating discussion?

The work of God begun with the resurrection of Christ and the task of believers.

Where are we to start? At which end do we take up this impressive chapter? We propose to approach it from the end. Not much attention generally is given to the last verse. It is not, however, a mere link with what goes before. It suits well to take it as a conclusion. The introductory conjunction (hōste: 'so that') means: 'Here is what results from all that I have said'. Paul hopes and wishes that 'his well-loved friends' should be steadfast and make progress in their work. Let us express it more precisely 'in the work of the Lord' for the work has begun, the work of God through Christ the Lord. Every

believer is to take part in this work. We do not think it overmuch to claim that the goal sought after by Paul throughout this whole chapter is to arrive at this exhortation, i.e.

So my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your work is not in vain in the Lord. (15.58)

We should note (with Simone Frutiger) that the theme of the work of God and of the believer appears at several points:

1. I worked harder than the others, or rather, it was not I but the grace of God with me (15).

Thus Paul claims that he has worked harder than all the other witnesses of the Risen One. This implies that they, too, have worked. But Paul here makes it plain that Christian action is of God (not I but the grace of God with me). He does not speak of his work to make himself important or to make up for his past as persecutor of the church. He speaks of it because for him it is an essential preoccupation. The work of God should stir up the activity of men (cf. 1 Cor. 3 and 4; 2 Cor. (all); Phil. 1.21,27,30; 2.12-16 etc.).

2. If in this life we only have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most unfortunate (19).

This is a curious statement. Why the superlative, 'most unfortunate'? Is Paul so unfortunate to be a Christian now? Does he not lack elementary modesty in believing himself the most unfortunate of all? To understand we need to remember what he said of himself in 2 Cor. 11, e.g. imprisonments, near death, scourgings, stonings, shipwrecks, innumerable dangers (23-26), and earlier, at the start of this epistle. There he reproaches his friends for finding a pleasure in looking on at the spectacle of the apostles and preachers being defiled (1.12;3.5). He writes in chapter 4.8

Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!

They appoint themselves judges instead of joining in the work. They are seated on the royal platform while the apostles are in the arena, unfortunate gladiators!

We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we are in disrepute.

There is no more absurd or unhappy situation than to lead such a life without having to do it, for a cause that could be claimed to have no real foundation, being accused of lying, of false witness at a time when one is undergoing such an assault. It does appear that these charges were not put together by the Corinthians. Paul is following through to the end the logic of his point of view. If Paul plays such a role for his friends to become spectators, imagine what this means! The statement makes no sense except as a sharp rebuke to the Corinthians.

3. Then comes the end when he will hand over the kingdom to God his Father destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (24,24)

In these verses Frutiger, with good reason, speaks of the work of Christ. The risen Christ does conduct a battle in which he yields obedience for at the end he will submit himself to the Father. For him, in contrast with the Corinthians, to reign does not mean to do nothing and sit in judgment on others. It means struggle. He has to establish his authority, and in a unique way, if he is to hand it over finally to the Father. He does not strive for his own glory. It can be seen that this passage, though apparently apocalyptic, is really polemic. Paul uses biblical texts to show how Christ crucified carries out God's work. He mentions this work of Christ because he wants his friends to share in it.

4. Why am I in danger every hour? (30)

Finally, Paul returns (it is a leit-motiv) to the dangers that surround his life as apostle: 'What do I gain if, humanly speaking, (i.e. 'say to my credit' and 'for my own glory') I fought with beasts at Ephesus?' He continues: 'If the dead are not raised, "let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die" '(32). Then without any kind of transition he passes on to the exhortation 'Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals" '(33). Once more, it is evident that we have to do here, not with general truths or even personal testimony, but with indirect rebuke. The Corinthians enjoy themselves while he risks his life. Chapter 14 shows that Paul can think of a mystical drunkenness but 11.21 ('For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk') shows that earthly food and drink can also be in mind. In every way, the Corinthians' creed exempts them from action rather than encouraging and upholding it.

Karl Barth, in the study that impressed Bultmann so much, Auferstehung der Toten (1924), insists that the resurrection of the dead is not one question among others that Paul takes up in this letter. Rather it is the first and last question. The resurrection chapter ends the epistle because Paul wants to take to its basic origins everything with which he charges his friends. Karl Barth here presents the resurrection as the statement of the radical otherness of God. Because the Corinthians are satisfied with themselves, Paul sets before them 'the flaming sword of the word', calling everything into question. We can well understand the stupefaction such as interpretation produced among the exegetes! We are convinced that Barth, using the provocative language of the period, has got to the heart of the profound intention of Paul. We may note the solemnity of the first mention of the word 'God' and its repetition (15,10,15,28,34,38,50,57). God is presented as the one who, by intervening in the resurrection of Christ, makes all things new.

The work of God is not ... and should not be for nothing.

We turn now to the last verse of the chapter: (58)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

We are specially concerned with the final words, 'knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'. The adjective for vain (kenos, empty, vain, for nothing) has already occurred in v.10 and v.14 (cf. Frutiger, 205).

We need to approach the word kenos from the eikē, 'in vain' of v.2, from mataios (illusory, futile) (v.17) and from ōphelos (useful) (v.32). Why is faith vain if the dead do not rise? Because it has no object? But are we not here forced to admit that its object is the after life! Is it because faith has no basis? Yes, for in the logic of the apostle the resurrection of Christ implies that of the dead. Yet it is necessary to observe the exact phrase: 'our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain'. Preaching finds its basis in the event of the resurrection of Christ. Indeed preaching itself is action insofar as it extends the event by making it known. For Paul, preaching is a

demonstration of the Spirit's power (1.18). It bears fruit. The conversion of the Corinthians proves its effectiveness: 'You yourselves are our letter of recommendation' (2 Cor. 3.2). Faith itself if it is genuine, cannot but share in this dynamic action. Insofar as the Corinthians deny the future of God by denying the resurrection of the dead, they place themselves on the margin of this mighty action. They halt its movement. Everything whether it be their faith, the apostolic preaching, the resurrection of Christ counts for nothing. Paul of course cannot resolve the issue, but he is obliged to take everything up where it began. His friends are still 'in their sins' (v.17). Like pagans, they know absolutely nothing. If they imagine they are of the truth but do not hold on to the apostle's message 'as he preached it to them' (v.2.), then their faith is nothing. Indeed Paul has to make it known to them (v.1) as if they had never heard it!

But Paul knows that Christ has not died for nothing and that he has truly risen. He believes that the grace of God in him and through him is not 'for nothing' (v.10). The work of God has not been halted by the stupidity or disbelief of men. The Corinthians of course did not recognize God in his work but Paul is convinced that once his friends have read his letter, they see their mistake; now you know that if you take the trouble, it will not be 'for nothing'. He writes: 'The trouble you take' because he thinks of them as already active and so he calls them 'beloved brethren' (58).

The resurrection is a new creation. Resurrection implies death.

This chapter should be entitled 'Death and Resurrection'. It is, in fact, as much a matter of death as of resurrection. Statistics show this, for Death: nekroi (dead) occurs 13 times; thanatos (death) 6; apothnēskō (die) 4; koimaō (to 'be asleep', 'to be dead') 4; in all, 27 references; for Resurrection: egeirō (raise, resurrect) 19; anastasis (resurrection; lit: put in standing position) 4; zōopoieō (make alive, quicken) 3; in all 26 references. It needs to be pointed out that Paul is not in the habit of using redundant words (it is the least we can say of an author whose brevity often makes him obscure) and yet he repeats unwearyingly resurrection of the dead and to raise the dead as if the Corinthians were not aware that 'raising' means 'coming out' of death. As Frutiger puts it: 'to raise one must first die' (203). The Corinthians appear to have forgotten this! They were no longer thinking of the present reality of salvation. They were not challenging the

resurrection of Christ but it had lost for them its significance as the dawn of a new world. All it meant for the believer was the possibility of an immediate deliverance and the flowering of mystic enthusiasm. They are fittingly described in the words of 2 Timothy 1.18: 'They have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already'. /2

We agree with Frutiger (217) that the question in verse 36 is rhetorical: 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' The question is put by Paul and not by the Corinthians, and there is nothing specifically hellenistic about it. Paul makes use of it to show the difference between the present (mortal) and the future (divine). The interpellation 'You foolish man!' (aphrōn) comes from Psalm 14.1: 'The foolish man says in his heart, "there is no God"'. /3 Paul does not go on to discuss a philosophical error but views this objection as the denial of the whole power of God. There's more than a mere break between the life we know and that promised to us. There is total renewal. The present body ...s like a mere seed, the body looked for like a plant. And Paul insists that the plant cannot come unless the seed dies. Death, however, is not necessary to establish the natural continuity that exists between the seed and the plant. Paul goes much further when he spells out that it is God with his creative power who makes the plant what it is. So Paul's purpose is to show that the future will not only be different but it will be the work of God alone. From v.39 on Paul makes use of different aspects of creation, sun, moon and stars to show the truly limitless possibilities open to the Creator. And he does it of course in the perspective of the new creation inaugurated by Christ. This thought is also found in 2 Cor. 5. 17-19: 'Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God'; and in Galations 6.15: 'For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation', where the RSV translates ktisis 'creation', not 'creature'; and in 1 Corinthians 8.6: where Paul writes: 'One Lord Jesus Christ through whom are (or 'will be') all things (creation).

The appearance of the risen Lord is, then, understood by Paul both as the first act in a radical transformation of the world and as the emergence of a new man, the heavenly Adam. This explains why Paul can present Christ both as 'Lord' (kurios, a term used by the LXX for 'God') and 'New Adam'. In the chapter, it is not men renewed by Christ who bring in again a new world but God who at the coming Parousia will

renew men and the world. Can we then speak legitimately of man's action and what is the use of such action if the kingdom is due to arrive soon in any case? We may note, however, that Paul's insistence does not include this 'soon' for he seems to reckon on a delay in the Parousia.

In Romans 8, he speaks of the future differently: the suffering recreation does not expect - as we might have expected having read chapter 15 - the resurrection or the Parousia but it does expect 'the glorious revelation of the sons of God' (19). Man who has become a son of God in the image of Christ will finally be able to exercise the responsibility as God requires. In the epistle to the Romans, Paul speaks in particular of the present effect of the resurrection. It must rather be said that sometimes Paul lays emphasis on the present effect of the resurrection and sometimes he emphasizes the future aspect, depending on what his aim is. His method of reasoning stems rather from his own intuitions or in relation to situations than from within the framework of a coherent system. /4

The resurrection does not prevent us dying

'Christ has died' - this is how the famous confession of faith begins, a confession quoted by Paul at the start of this chapter. We are so used to the statement that we no longer see the paradox. A man dead and buried as at the heart of our faith! He has not, of course, died for nothing. He has died 'for our sins'. In 2 Corinthians 4.12 Paul writes: 'So death is at work in us (the apostles) and life in you', (the beneficiaries). So death continues after a fashion in the sufferings of the apostolate and bestows life. We do not consider that it is forcing the text to say that Paul, when he quotes the confession of faith, is already thinking of the dangers he faces and, in contrast, the easy lot of the Corinthians.

In giving the list of witnesses of the resurrection, Paul refers to 500, 'Most of whom are still alive though some have fallen asleep'. /6 The explanation generally is: 'they can still bear witness to what they have seen. Thus your faith has a solid foundation.' We are tempted to reply: but now that they are dead, the foundation is shaking. Does Paul really imagine that the Corinthians are going to initiate an inquiry? Does he fear such an inquiry? Is he anxious in case they might find only 450 or 480? Barth is right to say that Paul has no apologetic intention in the chapter. He is not out to prove that the resurrection

is such an obvious event that no one, believer or unbeliever would be able to deny it except in bad faith. Paul, former persecutor, knows better than anyone that the certainty of faith depends on no other proof than the intervention of Christ, perceived by faith! /5 The resurrection of Christ is for him a divine act which bewilders, disturbs and shatters all certainties. The resurrection is the unexpected sign of the rise of a world so renewed that no one could describe it. If he lists all the witnesses then he does it to show that he is not the only one to have experienced the event which gathers together the whole Christian community in hope. It is the common experience of those who have been brought into the church through the message. /6 Paul obviously could not envisage that centuries later people would read his text with a positivist mentality, looking for proofs to gain reassurance!

All these people have been witnesses to the breaking in of the eschatological and divine life in the person of Jesus crucified but that did not make them immortal! Some, in fact, have died. It often happens that Paul introduces a topic with a brief preliminary reference, taking it up again more explicitly. /7 As he develops a topic, he is already thinking of another aspect of what he is saying. He has recalled the fact that 'Christ has died' before speaking of the resurrection. But he will come back to it again later when he mentions on two occasions that death has not yet been conquered. We know from 1 Thess. 4.13 ('But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others who have no hope'.) that the first Christians were preoccupied with the fate of believers who had died before the Parousia. Note in passing that this shows that the resurrection was understood at the start (1 Thess. is the earliest book of the NT) as the sign of the coming Parousia. It can be conjectured that the Corinthians who were baptized for the dead, may well have been influenced by a fear of the same kind (v.29). It is more likely, taking the chapter as a whole, that such people practised vicarious baptism for friends or relatives who had died before receiving baptism because they saw in it a pledge of immortality. Such immortality would have been understood as an extension in the beyond of the divine life given here below by Christ. If any criticism was to be passed on Paul, it would not be that he is too much a theologian but rather not enough. He does not enter upon a discussion or reflection on what people had done nor does he inquire after the philosophical or theological presuppositions of what they do. He does not digress from his initial project, i.e. to show the Corinthians that they placed themselves on the periphery of the movement opened up by the resurrection of Christ.

One of the major difficulties of the text stems from the different meanings Paul gives to death. Physical death is not, as such, the foe. (v.26) Paul confronts death almost daily, yet he writes to the Philip-pians (in our view at the same period and at Ephesus) that he does not fear death but would prefer it since it would bring him perfect commun-ion with Christ (1.21). Note again that the way in which he puts it does not agree with what he says in 1 Thess. 4.13. Death conjures up at times that of Christ whose death is seen as covering men's sin and sin committed in the name of the law (v.56). It also conjures up, as Montaigne would say the 'act of dying', i.e. the suffering that wears one out, the 'necrosis' (dying). It is thus the power of destruction set over against the quickening power of the risen one. Globally it is the sign that we are not in the kingdom, that the world is still struggling under the power of sin and of evil. In Paul's view, we do not live under an illusion but we shirk the necessary struggle when we act as if sin and death were already conquered and wiped out. If we were to paraphrase Paul, we could say:

Friends of Corinth, you act as if Christ had had no struggle, as if he had not paid for it with his life, as if he had not risen, as if he had been content to teach you a way of denying evil, suffer-ing and death. How is it you do not see that this has nothing to do with the gospel I preached to you, a gospel which the witnesses of the resurrection discovered and preached and which the apostles live out?

When we look again at vss 20-28 against the perspective of death, we see that Paul wants to convince the Corinthians that they have not yet risen. Why does he speak of the 'first fruits of those who are dead' (v.20) and not 'of those who have risen'? Is he not once again shooting an arrow at his friends? If they deny death, then it does not concern them! The reference to the account of Genesis 3 shows that the mortal condition of the sons of Adam is the wage of sin (Romans 5). Paul writes:

But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits,
then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (v.23)

The rather brutal remark 'each in his own order' reminds the Corinthians that Christ alone is glorified. They are not then to take his place! They will know glory at the Parousia in advance!

We agree with K.Barth that the to telos of v.24 has to be taken adverbially (then, at the end); that verses 24 and 25 are parentheses ('Then finally when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet'); and that the main proposition is to be found in v.26: 'The last enemy to be destroyed is death'; it anticipates the statement 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (v.54), the latter verse being the true completion of the theme. The difficulty of the phrase (v.26) is explained by the intersection of two themes we have marked out, the action of God and of Christ on the one hand and on the other, the reality, still present, of death. /8

The death of Jesus and his resurrection, then, will end in a decisive victory over death but it will involve a long and difficult struggle for Christ and Christians. Paul's exposition as it unfolds seems chaotic but finally emerges as very structured. It reflects in its way the ambiguous situation in which we find ourselves between the 'already' of Easter and the 'not yet' of the Parousia.

The theme of the second Adam, begun in v.22, is resumed by Paul in v.45: 'Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit'. In the preceding sentences he contrasted the body we know, a body corruptible, contemptible, feeble with the glorious body to come. The present life even if it is regenerate is not yet the divine life. The eschatological Adam (the Greek word eschatos is not to be translated 'last' but, at the very least, 'of the end') is 'life-giving spirit'. The resurrection of Christ is elsewhere presented as a reality of the Spirit (pneumatikos) (2 Cor. 3.17; 4.4). Paul sets the Christ-Spirit over against the 'psychic' Adam. The latter description is borrowed from Genesis 2.7 (LXX). The translation 'animal being' is unsuitable because the difference does not lie between animality and humanity but between the humanity of Adam and that of Christ. V.46 is surprising, it seems so banal: 'But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual.' J.Jeremias is right in stating that it has to do with the human body which is first 'psychic' and, then, at the moment of the Parousia 'pneumatic'. /9 But it is necessary to grasp once again that this statement is directed against the Corinthians who imagine that they are already fully transformed by the Spirit. But Paul's intention does not waver. He uses the doublet 'heaven-earth' (v.46) to remind his friends that they are not yet in heaven.

Paul anticipates an objection (v.50): 'I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.' He considers that the Parousia is at hand and reckons that many people he knows will still be alive when it takes place. 'They will not die.' They will be transformed in every way. He had not mentioned this to the Thessalonians. Did he consider it not very useful to be specific at the time? We do not know but, at all events, he considered this affirmation essential for the Corinthians. Man as he actually is (flesh and blood), even as a believer, baptised, regenerated by Christ and the Spirit would not be able, neither by right of inheritance nor by nature (v.50) to enter as he is into the kingdom of God.

The astounding event of the resurrection of Christ will be followed by the event even more extraordinary and truly cosmic of the general resurrection and the establishment of the kingdom. Then, and only then, will victory be achieved over death. It is of course God's victory but a final victory preceded by the struggle of Christ and of believers. This explains why Paul writes: 'thanks be to God who gives us the victory'. In the 'us' Paul includes his friends at Corinth. He assumes that from now on they will be convinced and faithful once more. He urges them with confidence:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

NOTES

*** This article first appeared in Études théologiques et religieuses, 1981:4:599-607 as 'Si les chrétiens refusent d'agir, alors Christ n'est pas ressuscité.' It is here reproduced in translation by kind permission of Pastor Guy Wagner of L'Église réformée de France, member of the distinguished panel of translators responsible for the French Ecumenical Version of the Bible; English translation is by the editor of IBS.

1. La Resurrection signe du monde nouveau, Paris 1970, Le Cerf.

2. K.Barth seems to be right when he says that the Corinthians had no proper theology and that they did not consider themselves to be in error. It is Paul who sees clearly the implication of their behaviour. They are satisfied with their 'spiritual springtime' and avoid the God who is 'wholly other'. Barth puts more emphasis on the revelation of God than on his action. It is beyond dispute that the Corinthians had been subject to an influence from the world in which they lived. But we are one with Frutiger in saying that it is through such a bias that we find the meaning of this chapter. There is no need, however, to speak of heresy. Paul perceives a vexatious tendency but does not denounce a fixed doctrine.
3. It is possible that the lack of knowledge of God mentioned in v.34 arises as an echo of the text.
4. OT texts which have given support to this idea should be noted and especially Ezekial 1.26, where God takes on a human appearance, and Daniel 7.13 where the Son of Man makes his appearance; also 7.22 where the reign of the 'saints' takes the place of that of the Son of Man.
5. R.Bultmann (Glauben und Verstehen, 1,34) says 'that it is impossible for me to understand what Paul says other than as an attempt to give credibility to the resurrection by presenting it as an historic and objective fact'. We agree with Bultmann (and Barth) that the resurrection was not an event which could be proved or verified. Paul nowhere mentions the empty tomb! We do not, however, agree with Bultmann when he claims that Paul wanted to present it as such. It leads Bultmann, nevertheless, to render Barth the astounding homage of having understood Paul better than he understood himself! Exegetes along with unsuspecting readers find great difficulty in grasping the very special character of the NT language and especially that of Paul. The first Christians found it a major difficulty to express their newly-born faith, not as a doctrine of man, but as the discovery of the glorification of the Crucified. They took up, of course, the message of Jesus and found support in the OT when interpreted christologically. They used the language of their milieu and especially apocalyptic language. But they also blended their experience whether personal or ecclesial. The net result of all this was not a very structured or restricted language but an affair of signs and mirrors. They may deny it but

- exegetes do have the tendency to treat the epistles as a long elaboration in private of theological thought. Who, we may ask, will write a study of the successive improvisations of Paul?
6. According to Barth, Paul wants to show them that his teaching is not some Paulinism but everybody's faith.
7. Especially in 2 Cor.2.14 to 5.21.
8. A translation suggested by Von Hoffman, Die Heiligen Schriften des NT, 11,2,p.366; also X. Léon-Dufour, Résurrection de Jésus et message pascal, Paris 1971, p.306.
9. In TDNT, 1, p.143.
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Raymond E. Brown,

The Epistles of John

Anchor Bible Series, Geoffrey Chapman,
London 1983 pp xxviii, 812

Some seventeen years ago the later Professor Joachim Jeremias of Göttingen pointed out to a number of us, present at 26 Brüder-Grimm Allee a book that he had just received from a former student. The book was in fact a commentary with introduction on the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of John by a scholar named 'Raymond E. Brown'. It was our first introduction to one who today has established himself an authoritative position in Johannine studies, in addition to an international reputation for careful, meticulous and discerning scholarship. This present volume on the Epistles, like the two-volume work on the Gospel, is equally thorough and exhaustive.

It is clear that in a review of this kind any major examination cannot be undertaken. It is proposed, therefore, to select those aspects that appeal to the reviewer as of major interest and importance. We find, for example, in the Preface mention of the anonymity of 1 John, leading to the suggestion that it is not a letter and nothing in it would support such a view (p.ix). Its main concern 'is to reinforce the belief and morality of the readers against a group that is doing the work of the devil and of Antichrist (2.18; 4.1-6), a group that has seceded from the Community (2.19) but is still trying to win more

adherents.' (ibid) Any attempt to suggest that all three letters are by the same author is a mere guess, and stems principally from the fact that 1 and 2 John appear to attack the same errors and use similar expressions (p.x). In 1 John it is almost impossible to get a structured sequence of thought (a section later deals with proposals for structure by scholars: 116-129); it is repetitive, often difficult to interpret due to its obscurity or imprecision; while insisting on keeping the commandments, we are never told what they are; and while he emphasizes probably more than any other writer the necessity of love, he shows little love for those who disagree with him, vilifying those who have been members of his own Community as demonic Antichrists, false prophets and liars (2.18-22; 4.1-6; 2 John 7) who should not be permitted any entrance nor even given greetings (2 John 10) (p.xf).

The method of the Commentary on the Epistles is on the same lines as that for the Gospel: detailed notes (rather more detailed than those for the Gospel and at times perhaps overmuch for all but the most interested scholar), followed by comment. Dr Brown explains the detail of the notes on two accounts (i) to allow room for comparative studies with the Gospel, not possible in the previous two-volume work; (ii) the obscurity of the language and expression where 'competent scholars are divided about the meaning of almost every verse.' (p.xii) The 'Comment' is for those who are concerned about the overall view. The division of notes and comment has not always been found convenient but rather time-consuming for those who prefer notes and comments together as more straightforward.

In chapter V of the Introduction, we are given 'The Theory Adopted in this Commentary', which he describes as 'closest to the views of de Jonge and Houlden' (p.69). The theory is tied up with understanding John's Gospel as preceding 1 John (and thus 2 and 3 John - the order 1,2,3 is accepted by Dr Brown). Major elements in the theory are. The main body of the Gospel was written about 90 A.D. In the ten years that followed, the Johannine Community became increasingly divided and the root of the division had to do about the meaning of Johannine thought and how it should be applied. The Community divided up into two, those who supported the writer of 1 John and those who were opposed to him. Both groups accepted the proclamation of Christianity known to us through the Gospel of John but each interpreted it differently. Outside influences are discounted, 'almost surely the two groups justified their opposite positions on the basis of the Johannine tradition itself'. (p.69) The Gospel itself must not be blamed for this. 'Rather

the Johannine tradition enshrined in the Gospel, as it came to both the author and his adversaries, was relatively "neutral" on some points that had now come into dispute. Either it did not contain direct answers for the divisive questions, or it contained texts that each side could draw upon for support.' (ibid) The writer of 1 John considers those who had left the church as innovators or progressives. They were guilty of distorting the tradition as it had come down from the start, and had seceded from the true Johannine Community (his adherents). The 'secessionists' - a word preferred to 'heretics', seen as an anachronism - considered the author and his followers, on the other hand, to be the ones who had broken communion with them. They may well have thought that the author was reviving an outmoded christology instead of following the implications of the christology set out in John (p.70). Brown suggests that the outcome of this division within the Johannine groups was that one was merged into the Church, the other into Gnostic groups. 'The amalgamation of the secessionists into the known gnostic movements of the second century would have required a heightening of the dualistic christology and perfectionist anthropology criticized in 1 and 2 John.' (p.71) The secessionists may have been the larger of the two groups and brought the Gospel with them into docetic, gnostic and Corinthian groups and this would explain why the Gospel was better known among the heretics than among orthodox writers of the second century. Possibly 1 John helped to make the Fourth Gospel acceptable to the Church by showing how the Gospel could be read in a non-gnostic way (ibid). On the basis of this interpretation Dr Brown can claim that 'in some ways through the combination of the Gospel and the Epistles critically interpreted, we can discover more about the internal history of the Johannine Community than we know about other NT churches, except the Pauline'. (p.xii)

What can be said about this 'exciting' and certainly provocative theory? It assumes, for example, that the secessionists views can be found within 1 John, with some support from 2 John. Any such constructions, however, must surely remain problematical especially in 1 John where interpretations are by no means easy to pin down. Dr Brown is well aware of the hypothetical nature of his construction and of any such 'internal history'. He is forced to admit that in his reconstruction of the views of the secessionists there is no direct quotation from John. Thus he can speak of Johannine tradition of which the Gospel is only representative (for evidence of wider traditions he cites John 20.30: 'Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book').

But perhaps the most complex aspects of his theory are to be found under the section: Christology-Secessionist and Fourth Gospel. (pp 73-79) It is suggested that there are elements in the tradition of John's Gospel that might have led the secessionists to do away with any interpretation of the Cross as a salvific 'coming' and to regard it simply as a continuation of that revelation of the glory of the pre-existent Jesus which began through the Baptist's baptizing with water (thus Dr Brown interprets 'beginning'). (1.14,31; p.79) John's christology is a high christology. The Baptist declares his pre-existence for himself (8.58; 17.5). Such a 'high christology' led the Jews to charge Jesus with ditheism, making himself a second God. Such a 'high christology' was the identity factor for the Johannine Community over against the Jews and various Christain groups' (p.74). It led the secessionists to devalue Jesus' earthly life, e.g. 1.14 can mean that 'the real purpose of Jesus' earthly life was simply to reveal God's glory in human terms (7.18; 8.50; 11.40; 14.9; 17.5,24), but not to do anything new that changed the relationship between God and human beings'. (p.75) A particularly strained interpretation relates to the phrase 'Not in water only but in water and blood' where 'came not in water' is said to attack the position of the secessionists who can claim that the incarnation of the pre-existent Christ took place in relation to the baptism of Jesus. (The writer refutes this by insisting that it was 'by water and blood' i.e. by the death of Jesus.) The terms in which the death of Jesus is spoken would encourage the secessionists view, viz 'lifting up' (usually, 'exaltation'), 'glorification', or Christ can lay down his life and take it again; there is no Gethsemane scene; Pilate has no power over Jesus but what comes from above (19.11).

The theory, however interesting and however elaborately worked out, still remains a hypothesis. In the nature of the evidence it may well be considered more speculative than convincing. Dr Brown puts forward his theory cautiously and honestly and tries to harness every strand of evidence in support of it. Whatever hesitation there might be in relation to this construction, should not be seen as any kind of qualification of the thorough, careful and judicious treatment of the epistles in the Notes and Comment. The 'Johannine Epistles' of Dr Brown are a 'must' for anyone interested in the area of Johannine studies.

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Death as Departure - the Johannine Descent-Ascent Scheme

Scholars' Press, Chico 1983

pp xviii + 231 \$10.50

This thesis, no. 63 in The Society of Biblical Literature series, was by a New Zealand scholar. It began as a Ph.D. thesis for Vanderbilt University, and was completed during the tutorship of de Jonge of Leiden and Schnackenburg of Würzburg.

The thesis is that the death of Jesus according to the fourth gospel was not the instrument of suffering and expiation that we find it to be in the synoptic gospels but rather the gateway to Jesus's return to the glory which he had with the Father. (The idea of expiation is indeed in the gospel, but it is not emphasized.) Thus the salvation wrought by Jesus does not rest specifically on his crucifixion and death (as in the synoptics and Paul) but on the whole compass of his life on earth, his coming from the Father and his going to the Father. This conclusion is confirmed by the gospel's sayings about the 'Descent and Ascent' of Jesus, into which parameter the writer also brings the 'lifting-up sayings', where the 'lifting-up' is interpreted to mean inclusively both the 'lifting-up' on the Cross and the 'lifting-up' to glory (following Bultmann and others). To this interpretation, which forms the substance of the book, and in which there is nothing very new, the writer brings an existential slant, in that (following Wayne Meeks) he sees the background of the gospel to be the collapse of its social world, following the experience of expulsion from the Jewish synagogue. It is a book 'for insiders', which manifests a 'sectarian consciousness'. (But surely it is the fourth gospel which - historically - lifts the historical Jesus out of the narrow confines of the Jewish world on to a 'supra-historical' or 'transcendental' plane and - so to speak - renders him 'accessible' to the whole world? Surely it is the fourth gospel, more than any other writing of the New Testament, which has been the basis for the fundamental Christian dogmas [or 'myth'] of the Incarnation and the Trinity?)

This book is a well-argued and useful exposition of the fourth gospel. But there are defects. Firstly, it is a thesis - not a real study. Being a thesis - and a rather short one - it has to be selective, not only in regard to the texts of the gospel but in regard to the authors whom the author follows. In regard to the texts, the writer - for instance - discusses the opinions of two or three scholars on the

'signs' of the fourth gospel (pp 24-6), but nowhere does he explore the importance of the 'signs' theme of the gospel, which surely is relevant to the thesis of the book. Similarly he often refers to 'belief' or 'beliefs' (the word he invariably uses for the Greek pistis) but never does he go into the question of faith. His bibliographical index gives the impression that he has widely consulted all the standard authors; but closer examination shows that the great majority of his references are not to discussions of the authors in his text but rather to passing allusions to them in his foot-notes. His approach throughout is narrowly rational and critical - indeed, almost fundamentalist. For he disallows the assumption of sources, and ignores the factor of tradition, and takes it that the whole of cc.1-20 represents the mind of the final author of the gospel. Frequently he speaks of him as 'writing for his readers'; and he analyses him from a very narrow, literary point of view. There is not a word in his index, for instance, about the place of tradition in the gospel, or the working of religion or religious myth.

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Kevin Condon

Ronald A. Whitacre,

Johannine Polemic, The Role of Tradition and
Theology

SBL Dissertation Series 67

Scholars' Press 1982 xiv, 278pp

Dr Whitacre's book on Johannine polemic is among the latest extensive writings that have appeared on Johannine Literature in recent years. The nature of the Johannine polemic has long been the subject of discussion and of the four that are often claimed, viz. anti-sacramental, anti-Baptist, anti-docetic and anti-Jewish, Dr Whitacre chooses anti-Jewish.

His thesis is that in the Gospel of John and in 1 John there is a sustained but not identical polemic. That in the Gospel is addressed primarily against Jewish opponents outside the community, that in the Epistle to former members of the community who considered themselves to be Christian. Dr Whitacre assumes that the author(s) felt that the traditions he used were necessary for his purpose and thus he does not

enter into the problems of redaction and of sources. This makes the task fairly straightforward but has, equally, the danger of taking too simplistic a view of rather complex data.

The identification of polemic can be elusive. John the Baptist says of himself in relation to Jesus, 'He must increase and I must decrease' (3.30). Do we say that this is part of an anti-Baptist polemic found here and there in the Gospel or are we to say with Dr Whitacre that it is evidence of his outstanding humility? (Dr Whitacre makes little or no mention of the possibility of an anti-Baptist polemic, but cf. p.92.) When Jesus prays that 'they (church) may be one' in his so-called high priestly prayer, is the writer thinking of divisions in the church (cf. 1 Cor.12), or is this a fairly standard stress in the church's regular parenthesis? Or yet again when we are told 'the word became flesh', is it merely an unusual way of speaking of human birth or does it reflect an awareness of those who denied that the real flesh or humanity of Jesus or do we here have an example of Johannine ambiguity? As is not unexpected, perhaps, Dr Whitacre, in pursuit of his theme, tends to soft-pedal other possible polemics. He is probably too emphatic in denying possible anti-docetism in the two writings though, by 'anti-docetism', we suggest only tendencies in this direction.

The Fourth Gospel is unique in the NT in that it uses aposynagōgos, and that on three occasions (9.22; 12.42; 16.2). The term means, literally, 'away from (apo) the synagogue', and is used in connection with excommunication from Judaism. It appears to reflect a period when the official liturgy had included the so-called 'Benediction Against Heretics' (we might expect 'Malediction', not 'Benediction!'), the birkath ha-minim, i.e. anyone who confessed Jesus was the Christ was expelled from Judaism. This Benediction, instituted in 85 A.D., is accepted by Dr Whitacre as in force when the Gospel was written; it marked the separation of Jew and Jewish Christian officially, expressing the growing hostility against Jewish Christians and, probably, the fear of being assimilated into the Christian community. Dr Whitacre claims that for the Gospel community it meant the undermining of its confidence to crisis point and it was to such a critical situation the author addresses his Gospel. He seeks to reassure his audience in the face of persecution and of particular importance is his stress on the paraklētos, the Holy Spirit, confirming for the church members their true relationship to God.

But how is such a writing to carry authority, assuming that the apostle John is not the author? Dr Whitacre's answer is that it gains it through the inclusion of the Beloved Disciple, considered as the community's teacher and authority. The Beloved Disciple has special knowledge of those points which are crucial to the author's argument e.g. betrayal (13.13-21); the empty tomb (20.2-10); Jesus' suffering and death; confirmation of a real death through the blood and water coming out of Jesus' side (p.17). The audience, Dr Whitacre claims, is an ethnically mixed group (i.e. including proselyte Jews) of second generation Christians who have been excommunicated from the synagogue. The real core of the opposition is the 'Pharisees', sometimes represented by the description 'Jews'. The lack of mention of Sadducees and Herodians is said - reasonably enough - to point to a historical situation after the fall of Jerusalem when the Pharisees' influence was paramount. It was a time of acute polarisation, with each party having its own exclusive claims. (p.23)

The working out of the polemic with its 'for' and 'against' is done systematically with the point of division being christological (Rosemary Ruether calls it 'the left hand of christology' in Jewish-Christian relations today, Faith and Fratricide 1974). Christians thus are loyal to Christ and the Torah, Jews are not (pp 25-67); children of God, Jews are not (pp 68-120); Jews are alienated from God, unlike believers. Such a rigorous concentration on polemic tends to be tedious, repetitive and predictable. The black and white approach - reflecting the dualism of the Gospel - has little room for greys.

The argument is not always easy to follow especially in the Epistle nor have the many headings and sub-headings (over 100 in 186 pages) made always for clarity. Not all scholars will agree that the doxa of John 2.11 refers primarily to the gratuitous generosity of God rather than Jesus' divine self-revelation; nor that sarx in John 6.53ff is a cryptic reference to Jesus' death (Whitacre does not appear to mention the possibility of John 6.52-58 as a eucharistic homily with its reference of 'flesh' and 'blood'); nor, perhaps, that the Epistle is 'extremely profound' (p.144) (Cf R.E.Brown, Epistles of John, p.x). And what of the claim that the 'sin unto death' is the breaking of fellowship, the separation of oneself from the community? Is the primary sin not that against Christ whatever may follow from it or express it? And does not the 'unpardonable sin' of Mark 3.29, the sin against the Spirit and the 'falling away' of Hebrews 6.4 support the latter interpretation? One of the remarkable features of this thesis is

the concentration on the Johannine traditions to the neglect of other important traditions, e.g. there are only six references to the Pauline corpus (notably, none to the kata sarka...kata pneuma of Rom. 1.3), none to Hebrews and none to that other 'Johannine' writing, Revelation.

The spelling of the name 'Ruether' is consistently given as 'Reuther' while the Hebrew of 'good desire' should be רצון הטוב and not רצון יטוב (p.174).

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J.A. Ziesler,

Pauline Christianity

Oxford University Press, 1983. pp 157 £3.50

This comparatively short book gives a good, clearly written account of what may be known of Paul's theology from a consideration of the letters generally accepted as authentic.

In the introductory chapter Ziesler points out that most of Paul's letters are occasioned by his pastoral concern for the congregations he had established, and this means that one cannot appreciate his theology by just collecting everything he wrote on any topic without regard to context. Thus, when Paul wrote to Gentile Christians who thought that it was necessary to observe all the requirements of the Jewish law, his teaching was different from that which he gave to those who felt that standards of morality and decency no longer applied to those who had entered into the liberty of the Christian life.

Paul's Christology is regarded as the central feature of his theology. The meaning and usage of the various titles such as Lord, Christ, is discussed and account taken of the continuing element of subordination to God.

One would have welcomed a fuller discussion of Rom. 9:5 than that given on p.42 but, after all, this book does not pretend to give an exhaustive account of Paul's theology.

In the chapter on 'The Centrality of Jesus Christ' there is a particularly valuable section on Jesus and the Spirit.

The other main chapters are 'Christ and His People', 'Old Life and New', and 'Christ and the Law'. In the last of these Ziesler points out that much of what had been the generally accepted view of Judaism in the time of Paul was shown to be incorrect by E.P.Sanders in his book Paul and Palestinian Judaism.

In the chapter 'Pauline Christianity in the New Testament and Beyond' we are given brief treatments of 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, Acts of the Apostles, and The Pastorals, with a brief look at developments in the second century, and at the formation of the Pauline corpus.

In the final chapter there is a brief look at the relation of Paul's gospel to the teaching of Jesus and to some of the other early representations of Christianity. The differences between Paul and the Synoptic Gospels are recognized but there is also a useful account of the continuity between Paul's teaching and the teaching of Jesus.

The Bibliography gives not only commentaries and books of general usefulness but also suggestions for reading chapter by chapter.

V. Parkin

Jouette M. Bassler

Divine Impartiality - Paul and a Theological Axiom.

SBL Dissertation Series 59

Scholars' Press 1982 pp 302

That God does not show partiality is stated in 2 Chr.19:7, in Deut. 10:17, and in Job 34:19. Each example, however, has its own distinctive flavour. So also in Deuterocanonical and Rabbinic literature the impartiality of God is variously interpreted. At no point, however, is the concept of Israel as the most favoured nation threatened, except in Seder Eliahu Rabba where, in striking similarity to Gal. 3:28 we find, 'Whether Gentile or Israelite, man or woman, male slave or female

slave, the Holy Spirit rests on him.' Since the date of this midrash is not earlier than the third century it cannot have influenced Paul's thinking, and may, in fact, have given its egalitarian teaching in response to that found in Paul.

Particular attention is given to Philo whose dates are not very different from Paul's. Both men, moreover, combined knowledge of the Jewish law with familiarity with the Gentile world, and both made use of the concept of impartiality. Philo's application of this concept is shown to be significantly different from Paul's, and this underlines Basler's contention that in assessing Pauline teaching one must not fall into the trap of assuming that a quotation of accepted Jewish teaching is incompatible with original thought on the matter.

It is argued that Paul has used what had become axiomatic in Jewish thought, namely that God is impartial, in a highly original fashion. Paul claims that in judgment God shows no partiality to Jew or Gentile, and similarly he shows no partiality in grace.

Bassler examines carefully the structure of Romans chapters 1 and 2, and disputes the usual treatment which, following the chapter divisions, regards 1:18-32 as concerned only with the sins of the Gentiles, thus limiting the statement of divine impartiality in 2:11 to the section which deals with the failure of the Jews. Bassler argues that 1:16-2:11 is one logical unit, basing this judgment on formal considerations.

The unit begins and ends with statements of impartiality, and within the unit there is no mention of Jews or Gentiles by name. Although at first sight 1:18-32 appears to be directed against Gentiles only, in fact 1:32 refers to Israel's apostasy in the worship of the golden calf.

Romans 2:11 is seen, not only as the conclusion to the unit which began with 1:11, but also as the thematic introduction to 2:12-29. So Paul has prepared for his argument that God justifies on the basis of faith by demonstrating God's impartiality in judgment and the universal inability to attain righteousness through obedience.

Paul continues to emphasize the correlation between impartiality in judgment and impartiality in grace as he cites the case of Abraham, as he turns again in chapters 9-11 to the Jewish/Gentile problem, and as

he considers the relationship between the 'strong' and the 'weak' in chapters 14-15. Even the question of Paul's purpose in writing Romans is illumined by the consideration of impartiality.

There is a brief look at the use made of the axiom of divine impartiality in other contexts, both Pauline and non-Pauline.

In the résumé of the investigation it is claimed that although the notion of God's impartiality was familiar, the use made of it by Paul was original and significant. It is also recognized that no treatment of impartiality, whether by Paul or by any other writer, was entirely unqualified. In his proclamation of the God who justifies the ungodly Paul undermines a fundamental tenet of impartial justice, so creating a dilemma which he leaves unresolved.

There are six appendices to the dissertation, of which that which deals with objections to Klostermann's analysis of Romans 1:22-31 is particularly valuable.

The author is to be commended for a careful and suggestive piece of work.

There are occasional typographical errors which are, in most cases, unlikely to cause any confusion. Two exceptions to the inconsequential nature of these errors have been noted: on p.34 and again on p.55 'talion' is given as the nominative of talionis. 'Talio' is correctly given on p.130.

A subsidiary argument for regarding Rom.1:16-2:11 as one unit is the use of pas which, it is said, is found in key verses throughout 1:16-2:11 yet is totally absent from the rest of chapter 2. But the value of pas as a marker which points to the isolation of this unit is diminished when it is recognized that the word is found in the verses of chapter 1 preceding v.16 as frequently as it is found afterwards.

V. Parkin

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